

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre – September 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 7b – Friday morning discussion session**

Question: I have a couple of questions. First, does the mind give up? Or is it the thinking habit that you eventually give up because of your whole practice?

Linda: It's sort of both. And *you* become stronger. You become so strong and so fast that the mind just can't get in, it can't drag you down to its level anymore. But it is that habit – you wear it down and break it down.

Question: So mind is like this person, and whatever her tendencies and things are. And those are attractive to what I am right now because it catches me and it gets me into the thinking. But I will have enough power through this practice and enough clarity through the practice to not get involved in those tendencies that is the mind?

Linda: Yes. So the mind is just a convenient thing to call the ego, the thinking. But what is the mind? It's almost like it's an entity that's invaded your body and your psyche. You were born as this pure, beautiful baby, free from the mind, totally trusting, and then the fear starts to come in and develop. It's that belief that you're a separate self, which really starts quite early in different people. And we get taught, "You are you. You're different to you. You do this and that."

Question: And all the compliments and non-compliments, they add up to this person that you are?

Linda: Yes, but in a way, you're the one developing this person. So this is about not even blaming the mind but saying, "I'm the one who is feeding the mind, and I just keep feeding it by my emotional reactions and habitual thinking."

Don't look for a fault in anyone or anything. Saying 'taking responsibility' doesn't mean that it's your fault. It's no one's fault. It's just how it is and you just accept that. Your parents did the best they could with you, just as their parents did, whatever that was. So they're not to blame either. We can tend to blame people: our parents, our teachers, this person, that person, this situation. But really no one's to blame, and that's the hardest thing to accept.

So yes, it's seeing that habit of not being here because you're scared of being here in your body – you might be hurt, you might be loved, or who knows – you don't know. So you try and control your situations by thinking about them and trying to plan out things and using anything you can to avoid being here. That becomes this very deep habit. Then you start to feel, "This is me. This body starts and finishes with me." So there's a deep fear associated with being in the body because you know one day it's going to be the end of you – well, you *think* one day it's going to be the end of you. And it's also very intense, being in your body; much more intense in a way than spending your life daydreaming and unconsciously suffering.

So people often start this only when they have an incredible trauma in their lives, something that forces them into now and they can see clearly what's happening. They realise they've got nothing to lose and start to look deeply into themselves – or they're desperate. So if you can start this before you're desperate it does give you a bit of a head-start because you haven't got that incredible trauma, or just an *average* trauma, to get over. (laughter)

Question: Yes, I feel that I have a bit of average trauma. (laughter) My dad is a meditator. My mum and dad are both kind of head strong and do whatever they feel like.

Linda: That's great. I didn't have any incredible trauma – just the usual trauma which is relative. But when you're feeling it as a teenager and child and growing up, it feels like incredible trauma to you. So the trauma thing is relative. But I wasn't consciously looking for anything. My teacher appeared and it was, "Oh god, that's what I'm looking for."

Question: I guess that's what happened to me when I started reading Osho, and after many years not satisfied enough. And then I met you.

Linda: Yes, it's not like you have to have some sort of traumatic life. It's just that you can have on the surface everything that should be making you happy – or get told makes you happy – and you're still not satisfied. You see, "Well, I've got this and this and this, but I'm still not satisfied." So it's really a dissatisfaction with living.

Question: Another question. Do you go towards enlightenment or does it come to you? Or is it something about the absolute and the relative? This retreat I have been pretty stable, steady. In the past or sometime during this retreat I've tried to launch myself into the space and those kinds of things, "Ah, enlightenment, happen now! I'm ready!" (laughter) And getting myself all worked up. But even getting worked up is annoying now because being worked up is more like a movement, and I just want to come back and be here, and come back to the basics as much as I can.

Linda: Well do that, but that excitement about it and wanting it also keeps you going. I can say be as stable as possible and do this and that, but when you start to feel that, "I want this! I want this," you really need that as well. And things like this will cultivate that and energise you and get you going, because you do need that incredible longing, that desperation, that frustration, everything – you do need it to keep going. If it was all just okay you wouldn't keep going. There needs to be this deep inner excitement and possibility, "Ah, maybe this is possible for me, not just someone else!"

Question: My trust in you, that's how it started.

Linda: That's the same with me.

Question: But I'm also trusting myself.

Linda: Yes, well the way I like to do it is very different to some teachers who just say, "Follow me, do what I say, be in the present – that's enough." But it's not enough. You need to work together for you to become more independent, but also more humble as well. That humility and independence is really necessary, I feel, because I was similar. I was quite independent in a lot of ways. I wouldn't have surrendered to a teacher easily. I saw cults around and I said there's no way I'd do that. But of

course, when I met the right teacher, I would have done anything for him. But he also encouraged this independence. I did feel like I was becoming more deeply humble but more independent at the same time.

Question: Yes, I really appreciate when you say have a structure and that whole discipline, not just in meditation sitting here for hours, but going back to the real world and having that structure.

Linda: The “real” world? The un-real world! (laughing) I feel that’s really important. Rather than being in an ashram or a monastery all the time where you start to develop your own little world – and it’s quite safe because you’re around like-minded people all the time, and this little world starts to develop within that – you go out and test all this with people who have no idea about this, and are going to be rude to you and hurt you, and not have any respect for what you’re doing necessarily. And test this, test where you are. So you go in and out of it. For me it was really valuable, and I’m sure it made me much more balanced in my realisation than if I’d just been in a monastery the whole time, where you can tend to become unbalanced in a certain way. So I think going in and out of retreat situations is the way to go.

You asked about whether you go towards enlightenment. My teacher used to say to me at times, “God has got his eye on you, he’s out to get you.” I don’t talk about God or anything but he used to talk about it. And it is sort of like that, you become eaten up by it – this incredible love. That’s what overwhelms you and consumes you in the end.

Question: Last night after we finished the chanting, I remember reading the English translation of the Heart Sutra, and some of the words came to me when I was meditating: that there is no enlightenment or unenlightenment, and no beginning and no end, and no eyes and no ears. In my practice I’m seeing I’m here. I’m not enlightened but I’m watching and the worry is disappearing.

Linda: This now is part of your enlightenment; this is all part of it. It’s not like you’re totally unenlightened and suddenly you’re enlightened. There is a point where you can’t go back, that final leap where you just can’t go back. It doesn’t mean there’s not more stuff to do but you can’t go back to this. But this is part of it, a big part of it.

Question: At least you’re not going away if you’re watching as much as you can and then you’re coming back. It’s not the end of the suffering but it is a solution that you’re working on to end the suffering.

Linda: And the more clearly you can understand the workings of the mind, the more effective you’ll be as an enlightened being as well, whatever you do, however you express it. Rather than saying, “Ah, I just woke up one day and I was enlightened.” How is that going to help people? They’ll be affected by you energetically but then they’ll go away and go, “Well, what do I do?”

If you can see clearly, realise, step by step how you got to this state – and this is the state now – it does make you much more effective as an enlightened, realised being. And you can pass on that independence and strength to others rather than having others just following you.

Question: I have a lot of post-enlightenment fantasies. (laughter) It makes sense to be useful.

Linda: It’s great that you admit that. (laughing)

Question: I'm trusting that if I realise when I'm with you I will be useful probably in the world to people. But I'm not adding to them (the fantasies.) I have another question. About slowing down, I remember you gave me advice and I've been using that. I had a glimpse, and you said to slow down, when you're coming into your breath or your body from having been outside, to come back slowly and not with a jolt.

Linda: Ah yes, when you see that you've been thinking, rather than this immediate reaction, "Oh no, I've done it again! I'm hopeless!" as much you can, just calmly come back into your body.

Question: I've been doing that a lot and trusting myself, and trusting that the moment is perfect. Well not perfect, but you're erasing the guilt of reprimanding yourself. So about slowing down – I'm feeling that helps in the practice– but I want to know about you slowing down pre-enlightenment and what was happening with your senses and non-senses. And now that you're enlightened, how you have slowed down and what you are seeing, feeling, and even the non-senses bit?

Linda: Well, I can't remember how it was. I really can't remember, it's so long ago now and it starts to fade. I remember the last interview I gave about that period in detail. It was quite a while ago and for some reason it felt quite important because it was the last time I clearly remembered it, and then it was all gone – not all but I can't remember details. It's a bit like thinking back to your childhood, you can't remember.

Maybe if you ask me more specific questions I might be able to say yes. But I can't dredge it up and say yes, I felt this or that. When you were saying that then, nothing happened, I couldn't remember anything.

Question: (faint question about interview)

Linda: No, somebody's got hold of it and won't give it to me. (laughter) Someone in America's got it, a guy named V. A. tried to get it from him a number of times. Maybe if I paid him, I don't know. It was actually a very good interview. He filmed it, he's a film maker and he did it.

Ask a more specific question.

Question: So you're sitting here and you're using your senses and language and you're looking at me but also... What I'm seeing is you but I'm also being a bit 2D instead of 3D. I'm seeing you but all these people in the background. Obviously there's my body sitting solid and I'm hearing some faint sounds in the kitchen. I want to know what's your reach as an enlightened being? It would good if you could tell me what you are seeing and feeling now.

Linda: You don't want much do you? (laughing) The "reach"? You mean what I'm actually seeing? (laughing) A bit of light entertainment? I can see the fire, S. ... (laughing) I see the same as you. Although how it used to be was more like that (narrower focus). And then it expanded to that (arms wide). So when I'm talking to you, I can't just see you, I'm aware of all this movement, and when U. is doing this and I can see him quite clearly. So it's the same as you.

But when I'm talking with you there's not a whole lot of stuff going on about anything. It's just listening and feeling you deeply, especially when I'm talking with someone, there's a sense of deep

listening with the body and feeling where your questions are coming from, rather than just looking at the surface and answering a question from what you say. So sometimes someone might ask a question and I'll give an answer that might not seem to relate so much to the question, but it's more what I feel from that person, what they're asking. Because often people don't really ask what they're feeling.

And why don't they? It's so confusing. Why don't people say what they're feeling rather than beating around the bush? (laughing) They're scared. They're scared of... It would be so much simpler.

Question: I've been feeling quite rocky for the last twenty-four hours. It's like I've spent the retreat in putting out more. I wanted more intensity and I've certainly got it. (laughter)

Linda: What's been happening?

Question: I've been sitting much longer than usual. I've been starting at four-thirty in the morning and a couple of days at five-thirty.

Linda: Really, wow!

Question: Two mornings I sat through morning tea as well. One of those mornings I hurt my leg a bit so I'm limping around and that's why I'm sitting in a chair.

Linda: What happen to your leg?

Question: I think because of sitting, this side of my leg where it's bent back, I've hurt the muscles from sitting still for six hours. It's been great but just in the past twenty-four hours I started to feel emotionally shaky. And that whole business with the bell really threw me because I felt like the stupid kid at school that couldn't do it properly. Then I got a very upsetting text last night about an old friend. It's nothing I can do anything about but it's brought to the surface a feeling of how fragile life is.

Linda: So when you put that much effort in you are inevitably at times going to feel shaky. Even though you want it, when it starts to happen you go, "Oh, no, it's too much." So for the rest of the day just take it easy. It's natural what you're feeling, and then a text like that will intensify the whole thing. So just do your best. Sit on a chair this afternoon. And sit out the retreat, because you will feel deep effects from this afterwards. Feeling emotional is part of it, you're going to feel that. Don't feel like you're being weak by being emotional or vulnerable, incredibly vulnerable. Let yourself be vulnerable.

Question: Something you said about the pain really helped me. I applied it in that last long sit. It was really painful and I was determined to hang in with it. But I realised there's part of me that's avoiding, like I was it with 80% but part of me hadn't let go, so I did. It really changed the quality. I understood what you meant. It was different from pain somehow; something different happened with it.

Linda: A lot more of the fear dissolved so you could just feel the pain as pain, and then it's more bearable. It doesn't mean it doesn't hurt, but good. And don't be scared to sit for long periods in the future either.

Question: I understood what T. said earlier about the early morning sits. I love the early morning sit. I've got much more energy in the morning because I'm awake anyway. So it was great.

Linda: In Japan you usually get up at four-thirty or four o'clock, sometimes three-thirty, I think. It's really early.

Question: And would you sit for a long time?

Linda: During retreats, yes. But the rest of time you do exercises first, then sit, and sit again and then breakfast would be very early, at six o'clock. We didn't sit any more than we do here, really. There were forty-minute sessions and then you get up and walk and then another forty minutes. It's quite relentless when you're doing that every day, but you have to be relentless.

Question: With what M. was saying about letting go, or the fear dissolving a bit, is that something I have to wait out? I was speaking earlier about the mental thing where the pain is there and I keep on bouncing around everywhere looking for ways to avoid it. Is it something that over time you eventually give up?

Linda: Yes, it develops. Yes, it develops with maturity and this practice.

Question: One of the things I realised this morning was that I'd spent so much time trying to do that work with pain, or emotional pain, that I'd forgotten the other half of it, which is to be really present for the beautiful stuff as well: the wind on the face, the feeling of a hot shower, all of those things. I realised that I'd put some quite subtle but strong barriers up between that as well, just like there were with the other. And it's just been lovely to allow myself to be gentle with myself.

Linda: Particularly doing this, you need to be gentle with yourself quite a bit, because this is so extreme and just enjoying walking out in the sun, sitting by the playground.

Question: And the other thing I'm really grateful for is to hear the people who've been willing to share so deeply because so much of it is everybody's story. The familiarity of that is huge. It makes me think that we're all pulling each other up at the same time. That that movement – it seems highly unlikely that there'd be so many of the same experiences at the same retreat within sittings of each other. It's lovely.

Question: My question is about decision making. It feels that the more I get into the practice and devote towards it, the more I'm coming up against my mind. It seems like a huge chunk of me is going, "This is not you, this is not what you're supposed to be doing," like becoming less of a someone and facing pain, as opposed to going towards pleasure. And a whole bunch of things that seem to be the other way around, as opposed to how I've been told and feel in my mind you're supposed to go. And another part of me which doesn't really feel like a thought or a feeling is just going, "Go that way, do this," but with that one there's less of an emotional thing. It's like I don't know what's going to happen. It feels like a large of part of me is resisting. So I was wondering about that process? Was that difficult for you at all to make decisions that seemed irrational both to

yourself and other people? And how much did you trust it? Were there times that you didn't trust it and you backed off? Does that make sense?

Linda: Yes. Well, I was fortunate in a way because not long after I met the man who became my main teacher – and then I had my Zen teachers – something happened and I didn't have to make a decision. It was just so obvious, "Ah, this is what I've been looking for all my life! This is what I want." From then on – of course there were little things – but that main decision of, "This is what I want," was there so everything revolved around that. But of course within that there were different decisions like living stuff.

There were a few times or quite a few times when it was incredibly, incredibly difficult and I just felt completely crap and I wanted to get out of it, but I sort of knew I couldn't. But there was this desire, "Why I can't be normal and reasonably happy like everyone else?" So yes, there were a number of times I felt like that. But most of the time, it just overtook me, overwhelmed me. So there wasn't that big decision: should I do this or not. I just did it; there was no choice there. And once I got into it there was no way I could go back, or forward, or anything – I was just doing it.

Question: So it didn't feel at any time to you that there's sort of two of you? Like gardening is something that I would never do; I would hate doing that usually. The only way that I could do it that it makes sense with respect to practice. But a huge part of me is going, "What are you doing! There's the psychology thing and music and other things that are more the way L. (me) is supposed to be."

Linda: That was still there until the end. It was always there but that's why I was doing this; I couldn't stand that. I was really sick of being me but it didn't mean the mind gave up. It was still going, "No, do what everyone else is doing. Do that." But it was just so strong in me I knew I wouldn't – I couldn't. But there wasn't this big decision of should I do it or not. There was just doing it. But it didn't mean that the mind wasn't there trying to resist every step of the way, in some way. And there was still a desire to be someone, and I thought I was going to be someone more. All that stuff was still going on. But yes, I wanted to get out of it at times. Not really seriously but I just didn't know what to do, I felt so horrible.

Question: I think what I'm feeling is not really that I want to get out of it. Maybe it's the reality settling in, of what's involved.

Linda: It's not romantic. I saw this photo of the monastery I went to in Japan before I went – it looked so beautiful. (laughter) I got there and it was more miserable than I've ever been! (laughing) It was horrible! But no, this is not exotic, this is not romantic. There's not much entertainment. There's a bit, but not much. And yes, that's the reality of it. But at the same time don't get too bogged down in the hard work of it. Do things in your life that you do enjoy and give yourself little breaks. Don't say, "I can't do this ever again." It's not like that. You've got to do things in the world that you enjoy doing to balance the whole thing.

Otherwise you will burn out doing this. It'll be too extreme, too rigid and you'll want to break out in some way that you'll probably regret. So yes, do other things in your life. Doing this and devoting yourself to it doesn't mean that you can't work, that you can't have a girlfriend, that you can't have a relationship with someone, you can't have friends, you can't go out for dinner or watch movies; you can.

But this does eventually become the main thing. But don't make it too much, too rigid. You have to be a bit softer with the other things in your life and not be scared that they're going to take you over, and not do them because you're scared they're going to interfere with this, because it won't, it's all part of it, it's all the same. You do need to have these periods of formal practice where you sit and just devote yourself to it but the rest of time it's good to go out in the world and test it, do stuff, and practice as well.

But be able to do that rather than having this fear, "Oh, if I go into the world it's going to take me away from this." And that's what makes you stronger and more sure of this too. So you can still study and do this. What you're doing right now is great. But it doesn't mean you can't go back to finish the degree. And you're in the middle of hard slog at the moment. When you leave here, things will be different.